

plan. These two men were now the rulers of England, and, during the months of their supremacy, they lent their patronage to Wycliffe. From its purely political aspect, the alliance was much like that of Oxford and Bolingbroke with Swift. In each case a pair of ambitious politicians wished to persuade the nation that a certain policy was desirable, and in each case they used for this purpose a man supreme in the arts of persuasion and debate. In the days of Edward the Third theological argument in Latin and popular preaching in English were weapons no less formidable than pamphleteering in the days of Queen Anne. If Swift carried the art of pamphleteering to perfection, Wycliffe was at once the greatest schoolman and the greatest English preacher of his day. By the subtle but wearisome methods of late medieval dialectic, he was able to recommend to the Oxford students new views on religion and society, which must in reality have grown up in his mind by a process more like intuition ; nor was he less formidable when in the pulpit he preached to all classes the doctrines which he had first put into shape for the learned. Such, viewed as a political force, was John Wycliffe, and as such he was, for a few years, patronised by these statesmen, who had approached some of his conclusions from a very different standpoint and with far more disinterested motives.

Wycliffe had some years before published in his *De Dominio Civili* \* an elaborate scholastic argument for the secularisation of Church property. His light was not hid under a bushel, for he was acknowledged to be the greatest theological scholar and thinker in a centre of learning and thought which has no parallel in importance to-day\*. Men went to and from Oxford and carried with them from the lecture-room, to the country the ideas which moulded religion, politics, and society. There were indeed two Universities, but there was only one Oxford; and at this time Wycliffe reigned there supreme. From there his opinions had emanated over the country, and from there John of Gaunt and Lord Percy invited him up to London to preach for the sake of disendowment in the churches of the City,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Chrtn. Atig.* \* 116-7\*